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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000845

SIPDIS

NEA/ARPI FOR STHORNE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: QATAR: UPDATE ON NATIONALITY ISSUE

REF: A. 04 DOHA 2010

[B](#). DOHA 723

[C](#). DOHA 728

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (A) and (B)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Over the past several months, post has received numerous reports from Qatari nationals that the government has revoked their nationality (reftel A). According to various sources, the group most affected by these revocations is the Al-Ghufran branch of the Al-Murra tribe. This tribe has strong links to Saudi Arabia and the members are of Saudi origin. The 1996 failed coup attempt against the current Emir was broadly supported by the Al-Ghufran branch. The Government of Qatar claims that it had been compelled to revoke the nationality of these Qataris because they are dual nationals who have refused to comply with a long-standing requirement to surrender one of their two nationalities. Post has formally expressed concern about this practice and has requested a fuller explanation of this policy. End Summary.

The Practice

[1](#)2. (C) Under this practice, heads of families are receiving letters from the MOI informing them that their nationality has been revoked. These individuals must then sign a document, agreeing to give up all rights to Qatari nationality and citizenship. Upon signing, these individuals must either leave the country if they have a second nationality or find a Qatari sponsor in order to remain in Qatar. Some of those who have refused to sign the document relinquishing their nationality have been imprisoned.

Nationality Law

[1](#)3. (C) The Nationality Law of 1961 and subsequent amendments outline the criteria for nationality. According to the 1963 amendment of the Law of 1961, "original Qataris are those who were residing in Qatar before 1930 and maintained their normal living under their Qatar naturalization" until 1963. Government officials claim those losing their nationality are dual nationals, a status not permissible under Qatari law. Qatari law does not appear to prohibit dual nationality but does state that "Qatari nationality can be withdrawn from any of its holders" if the individual has "acquired another nationality." According to numerous sources, thousands of Qataris possessing dual nationality with the full knowledge of the government of Qatar have not been ordered to drop their non-Qatari nationality. Sources further claim that not all the individuals whose nationality the government has revoked had dual nationality.

[1](#)4. (C) The Nationality Law of 1961 also states that minors have the right to choose their original nationality upon their 21st birthday. The children of parents whose nationality is withdrawn also lose their Qatari nationality. The children have no ability to keep their Qatari nationality, an apparent right under the current nationality law.

The Outcome

[1](#)5. (C) It is alleged that approximately 6,000 to 10,000 people have lost Qatari nationality through revocation. Those holding government employment have lost jobs, and their entire families lose government benefits (housing, education, employment, health, etc.) for which they were eligible as citizens of Qatar. Many whose nationality has been revoked are residing in Qatar as stateless people ("bidouns") who cannot travel out of the country.

Effect on Americans

16. (C) Individuals possessing Qatari and American nationalities have also been affected by this practice. A Qatari-American man recently lost his Qatari nationality. His children, who hold dual Qatari-American citizenship, also lost their Qatari nationality as a result. Two U.S.-born daughters of a former police officer have also had their Qatari nationality revoked. Their father came to the Embassy to report that he gave up his Saudi nationality in 1996; yet, Qatari officials proceeded to revoke the nationality of their deceased grandfather, which automatically resulted in their whole family's losing Qatari nationality.

Possible Motive

17. (C) Some speculate that the apparent campaign of revocation is happening now as part of the government's preparation for upcoming elections and concerns about Saudi interference in Qatari politics. The Al-Murra is the largest tribe in Qatar and it is alleged that there is some apprehension that the tribe will form a large voting bloc in the new parliament. (Note: Some estimates put the Al-Murra tribe number at forty thousand. End Note.) Further, given the Saudi influence and links to this tribe, there is concern Saudi Arabia will use its influence with the Al-Murra tribe to interfere in Qatar's internal affairs and politics.

Regional Implications

18. (C) The governments of neighboring Gulf countries are said to be concerned that these revocations will impact domestic and tribal politics in their respective countries. The Al-Murra tribe has branches in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. Sources speculate that should Qatar continue with this policy, there may be repercussions affecting regional stability. Sources also allege that Kuwait has offered to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Qatar regarding this issue, as tensions are said to be high between the two regarding Qatar's treatment of tribe members.

Government's Position

19. (S) Senior government officials have reported that the current campaign of withdrawing nationality comes after several years of pressing dual nationals to choose which nationality they wish to retain. Many of these dual nationals are members of the Al-Murra tribe. Those still holding dual nationality are now being identified and their nationality withdrawn. Government officials further note that several thousands have lost their nationality, but that approximately 2,000 have subsequently had their citizenship restored.

10. (S) On May 1, Mohamed Al-Merri met with Poloff to report that Dr. Jabor Al-Merri, former managing director of Qatar Petroleum and prominent member of the Al-Murra tribe, had met with the Emir regarding this issue. According to Mr. Al-Merri, the Emir was displeased that the Al-Murra had taken this issue to the international media and stated that he would not be pressured into changing the policy. Post has submitted a diplomatic note expressing USG concerns about the practice of withdrawing nationality and seeking an explanation from the Qatari government (reftels B & C).
UNTERMEYER